



9 March 2019

The Prime Minister
Minister of Arts Heritage and Culture
Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Tēnā Koe Prime Minister

Following a hugely successful Reclamation Festival at Ihumaatao last weekend, supporters of the Auckland-based Save Our Unique Landscape (SOUL) Campaign will march through the streets of Wellington on March 12, from Te Wharewaka (near our national museum) to Parliament. Our purpose is to deliver a petition with over 17,000 names calling on the Government to intervene to stop the imminent destruction of the rare and precious cultural heritage landscape at Ihumaatao, near Auckland International Airport. The hikoi is being organised by SOUL Solidarity Pōneke who want the Government to know people in other parts of the country are deeply concerned and willing to take action.

So far, no Government Minister has agreed to welcome this hikoi at the Seddon Statue and receive the petition. When the whawhai driving a march on Parliament relates to Māori *and* national interests it behooves the Government, at the very least, to acknowledge the concerns of the people and send a minister of high standing to welcome the hikoi and receive the petition.

Māori are deeply relational people and value a mana to mana approach. From the point of view of those marching and growing numbers of supporters across the country, it will look bad if no Minister turns up. It will seem as if the Government, with its public commitment to fairer dealings with Māori, is ignoring this whawhai and the deep mamae it stirs. It will send a message that the Government is waiting for it to go away. This whawhai won't go away because justice is driving it.

It is courageous of Green Party Co-Leader Marama Davidson to be there to welcome the hikoi and receive the petition. She has taken the time to visit the land (many times in fact) and to understand the issues. She knows the people leading the Campaign will be there until the end. But when a number of ministerial portfolios are implicated, including your own, the events warrants ministerial attention.

Labour cannot leave this matter to the Greens to sort out. Minister of Conservation Hon Eugenie Sage has been holding the matter for the Government. She has been to Ihumaatao also and knows what is at risk – conservation, archaeological, cultural heritage, environmental, and spiritual values. But she alone cannot address this problem. Labour must step up. We welcome Auckland-based Labour MP Anahila Kanongata'a-Suisuiki attending the event but where is the Labour ministerial presence standing alongside Marama?

A confrontation on the land could happen any day and it will not be simple or brief. Iwi, unions, churches, students and multiple other groups have offered their support if SOUL is forced to resort to civil disobedience and peaceful passive non-violent direct action to stop the bulldozers. Many commentators have noted a parallel with the 1980s debacle over Takaparawhā (Bastion Point). Some

people have tried to brush it off saying, Takaparawhā was publicly-owned land while Ihumaatao is privately-owned. But the current owner is a willing seller, opening a clear pathway for Crown/Auckland Council intervention – the only impediment is money but what is the price of justice?

Confrontation is no way to settle a problem but SOUL have exhausted all other avenues of objection and resistance. If it comes to confrontation, the Government may regret not acting sooner, especially when SOUL has written so many letters over so many months to you and your ministers seeking to avoid it, including this one. A confrontation will draw the attention of very many Māori and settler peoples from throughout the country.

We, the six co-founders of SOUL, are mana whenua. We stand with the support of our whānau, hapū and kāinga, from kaumatua and kuia, to pakeke and tamariki, many of whom have felt excluded. Large numbers of mana whenua have signed the petition to stop the development, including people living in the papakāinga at Ihumaatao. A local iwi, Te Kawerau ā Maki, has worked with the developer to mitigate the worst impacts of the development and achieve some benefits for iwi. But the sustained campaign and growing momentum against the development attests to a depth and breadth of feeling that it will destroy a unique and precious cultural heritage landscape and negatively impact the papakāinga.

The land at Ihumaatao matters to our country because it holds stories and remnants of the beginnings of our nation. It was unjustly confiscated in 1863 and there is no getting around that fact. The people at Ihumaatao have suffered terribly. Enough is enough. New Zealanders will not stand by and watch the destruction of our precious cultural heritage landscapes. These places define who we are as a nation. For Maori, these places also define who we are as a people, our whakapapa, and our health and well-being.

We the cofounders of the SOUL Campaign implore you not to ignore this whawhai any longer. The Government can and ought to settle this matter in a good way, for the good of our people and the nation. As the country's Prime Minister, we beseech you to exercise leadership to 1) ensure that a high standing Government Minister from the Labour Party welcomes the people and receives the petition on Tuesday alongside the Green Party Co-Leader, and 2) take further action that will avoid a confrontation on the land and produce an outcome all the parties can live with.

Nāku noa

Haki Wilson, Qiane Matata-Sipu, Pania Newton, Bobbi-Jo Pihema, Moana Waa, Wai o Te Rangimarie Rakena

And Frances Hancock

On Behalf of SOUL (Save our Unique Landscape) Campaign

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Copied to:

Rt Hon Winston Peters, Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of New Zealand First

Hon Nanaia Mahuta, Minister of Māori Development and Minister of Local Government

Hon Andrew Little, Minister of Justice, Minister of Treaty Settlements

Hon Phil Twyford, Minister of Housing and Urban Development

Hon Kelvin Davis, Minister of Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, Minister of Tourism

Hon Peeni Henare, Minister of Community and Voluntary Sector

Hon Aupito William Sio, Member of Parliament for Māngere, Associate Minister of Justice

Hon Willie Jackson and Hon Meka Whaitiri, Co-leaders of the Labour Party Maori Caucus

Hon Marama Davidson and Hon James Shaw, Co-leaders of the Green Party

Hon Eugenie Sage, Minister of Conservation